



BOROUGH OF BRIDGWATER

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
FOR THE YEAR 1943

G.H. PRINGLE, M.R.C.S. (Eng.), L.R.C.P. (Lond.), D.P.H.
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

B O R O U G H O F B R I D G W A T E R.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL
OFFICER OF HEALTH, FOR 1943.

Health Department,
Town Hall,
Bridgwater.

July, 1944.

TO:
THE MAYOR, ALDERMEN & COUNCILLORS OF THE BOROUGH OF BRIDGWATER.

Mr. Mayor, Mrs. Councillor Reed and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in presenting to you my third Annual Report on the health of the Borough, which is in the same abbreviated form as its predecessor. In accordance with the recommendations of the Ministry of Health, certain statistics and other information cannot be published at the present time.

The appointment in May of two Health Visitor-School Nurses, each devoting one-third of her time to Public Health duties has been of the greatest assistance. Their duties have not only included Diphtheria Immunisation work, the home visiting of certain infectious cases (details of which are given later in this report) and the following-up of scabies cases and contacts, but they have also assisted in making numerous other visits of a general nature which could not have been satisfactorily undertaken by any other means.

The central office, established in 1942, for the Medical Officer of Health of the Bridgwater Borough and Rural District, has continued to work smoothly and has coordinated the work between the two authorities and with the County Health Department in the best possible manner.

I have to express my thanks to the Chairman and Members of the Health Committee for their support, to Mr. Lean, the Sanitary Inspector, for his willing collaboration, to the Health Visitors and clerical staff who have assisted in no small measure to deal with any enquiry or request that has been made, and to the Heads of other Departments for their help throughout the year.

I am, Mr. Mayor, Mrs. Councillor Reed
and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

G.H. PRINGLE.

I. VITAL STATISTICS

REGISTERED BIRTHS

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Live Births - Legitimate	180	169	349
do. - Illegitimate	9	18	27
	<u>189</u>	<u>187</u>	<u>376</u>
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Still Births - Legitimate	5	2	7
do. - Illegitimate	-	-	-
	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>7</u>

DEATHS.

After making the necessary amendments to allow for deaths of non-residents occurring within the Borough and those of normal residents which took place outside the Borough, there were 258 Bridgwater deaths. Of these 111 were males and 147 females.

CAUSES OF DEATH	1943	
	Males	Females
All causes Total 258	111	147
1. Typhoid and para-typhoid	-	-
2. Cerebro-spinal fever	1	-
3. Scarlet fever	-	-
4. Whooping cough	-	-
5. Diphtheria	-	-
6. Tuberculosis of respiratory system	8	6
7. Other forms of tuberculosis	-	2
8. Syphilitic diseases	-	-
9. Influenza	3	5
10. Measles	-	-
11. Acute poliomyelitis and polioencephalitis	-	-
12. Acute infantile encephalitis	-	-
13. Cancer of buccal cavity and oesophagus (M) uterus (F)	1	4
14. Cancer of stomach and duodenum	2	3
15. Cancer of breast	-	5
16. Cancer of all other sites	8	13
17. Diabetes	2	-
18. Intra-cranial vascular lesions	7	19
19. Heart disease	30	38
20. Other diseases of the circulatory system	5	4
21. Bronchitis	7	5
22. Pneumonia	4	5
23. Other respiratory diseases	1	2
24. Ulcer of stomach or duodenum	3	1
25. Diarrhoea under 2 years	-	2
26. Appendicitis	2	-
27. Other digestive diseases	5	5
28. Nephritis	2	3

CAUSES OF DEATH	1943	
	Male	Female
29. Puerperal and post-abortion sepsis	-	-
30. Other maternal causes	-	-
31. Premature births	6	2
32. Congenital malformations, birth injuries, infantile diseases	-	2
33. Suicide	1	1
34. Road traffic accidents	1	-
35. Other violent causes	4	1
36. All other causes	8	19

INFANTILE MORTALITY

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Deaths of children under 1 year			
- Legitimate	5	9	14
- Illegitimate	1	-	1
	<u>6</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>15</u>

II. INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The following table sets out the cases in the Borough notified during 1943.

<u>DISEASE</u>	<u>TOTAL CASES NOTIFIED</u>
Acute Poliomyelitis	-
Cerebro-spinal Meningitis	8
Diphtheria	1
Dysentery	-
Enteric fever (including paratyphoid)	-
Erysipelas	8
Measles	245
Ophthalmis Neonatorum	2
Pneumonia	26
Puerperal Pyrexia	5
Scarlet Fever	55
Small Pox	-
Whooping Cough	69
Food Poisoning	1
	<u>420</u>

Measles and Whooping Cough.

Measles was prevalent during the first half of the year, but although there were 245 cases there were no deaths.

All cases of measles and whooping cough notified are visited by the Health Visitors. These visits are particularly important in Bridgwater as in many of the homes conditions are such that satisfactory isolation is difficult; and in some cases admission to hospital has been arranged either

owing to lack of suitable facilities or, in a few cases, owing to the desirability of allowing a mother to continue important war work.

On the matter of the home visiting of these cases I might refer to the County Medical Officer's Report for 1942. Dr. Davidson quotes a statement made by Sir William Savage some 25 years previously, which reads: "The successful management of whooping cough and measles is, in the main, a question of the proper hygienic environment of the cases and the adoption of suitable precautions".

Scarlet Fever.

Scarlet fever with 55 cases showed moderate prevalence in the last quarter. The disease was of a mild type, but difficult housing conditions and the inadequacy of satisfactory isolation made it necessary to admit the bulk of the cases to hospital. One school was closed for 10 days, as there was evidence of the spread of infection in two of the classes.

III. TUBERCULOSIS.

There were 57 cases of respiratory and 6 cases of non-respiratory tuberculosis notified during the year.

The number of respiratory cases shows a considerable increase compared with the two previous years - 27 in 1941 and 36 in 1942.

War-time factors are doubtless contributory causes, but as explained in last year's report, modern methods of diagnosis are also probably to some extent responsible.

The importance of returning cases, after a period in hospital or sanatorium, to good home conditions where treatment in the form of rest, and open-air life, and suitable employment cannot be over emphasised. The present housing situation too often makes this well-nigh impossible.

IV. CONTAGIOUS SKIN DISEASES ETC.

Scabies.

The following table shows the number of cases treated at the Old Isolation Hospital during the two years 1942 and 1943:-

	<u>1942</u>	<u>1943</u>
Male Adults	85	58
Female Adults	128	71
Children	398	386
	<u>611</u>	<u>515</u>

No changes have been made in the treatment arrangements which continue to function satisfactorily. It is worthy of note that there is not only a welcome fall in the incidence, but that the majority of the cases received treatment at an early stage in the disease.

Verminous Conditions.

A cleansing station for the treatment of verminous conditions was opened in the Borough in June, and the following table shows the attendances from its opening until the end of the year.

	Number of individuals	Attendances
Adults	11	22
Children of School age	352	634
Children under 5 years of age	10	17
TOTAL	373	673

V. DYPHHERIA IMMUNISATION.

The following table shows the number of children who completed a course of immunisation during the year:-

Age under 5 years	Age 5 - 15 years	Total
293	269	562

11 children were Schick tested for susceptibility.

The percentages of the child population in the Borough considered immunised at the end of the year were:-

Under 5 years 61%
5 - 15 years 75%

This is a considerable improvement on previous results, although as I stated in last year's report at least 80 per cent of the child population must be protected in order to achieve comparative safety.

The best method of protection is to give each child two immunisation injections at one year of age, and a third reinforcing injection early in school life. In order to make the Bridgewater arrangements as complete as possible each child has had, from the inception of the scheme, a special immunisation record card, and shortly after the child's fifth birthday the parents receive a letter inviting them to bring the child for this third injection.

It is interesting to record that since the beginning of the scheme in the Borough - a period of less than three years - 910 children under 5 years, and 2,941 children between 5 and 15 years of age have been immunised.

VI. HOUSING.

The housing situation is still extremely difficult, but in my opinion the re-housing of Bridgewater persons is often prejudiced by the operation of the Lodging Restrictions Order, which conserves accommodation for war-workers. Although all are anxious that the war-workers should be accommodated as well as possible, it is my opinion that the re-housing of some Bridgewater families, living under appalling and often overcrowded conditions, should be given a greater measure of priority.

VII. WATER SUPPLY.

The Water Supply for the Borough has been adequate, and the regular samples have proved that, after chlorination, the bacteriological condition has been satisfactory.

VIII. SWIMMING BATHS.

As in the previous season strict supervision was maintained over the condition of the water in the swimming baths, and by the regular use of chlorine preparations the water was maintained in a reasonably satisfactory bacteriological state of purity.

IX. SPECIAL War-TIME ACTIVITIES.

During the year the Health Department has continued to deal with a large amount of work in connection with Civil Defence, the Evacuation Scheme, and other aspects of war work.

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE CHIEF SANITARY INSPECTOR

To:

The Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of the Borough of
Bridgwater.

Mr. Mayor, Mrs. Councillor Reed and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit my Annual Report for the year ending 31st December, 1943. This report is of necessity very curtailed and no mention is made of Civil Defence activities.

Complaints.

During the year 143 complaints were received and dealt with under the Public Health or Housing Acts. This is a decrease of 10 in comparison with the figure for 1942.

In only 3 cases were Statutory Notices served and in no instance was it necessary to take legal proceedings.

Housing.

125 houses were inspected for the purpose of having housing defects remedied, no systematic house-to-house inspections being carried out. A list of the defects found and remedied is given in the summary at the end of the Report.

Owing to the shortage of labour and materials it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure adequate repairs and in most cases it has become impossible to give a time limit in which repairs must be carried out.

Some of the houses scheduled for demolition prior to September 1939 are deteriorating and steps may have to be taken to close the houses and rehouse the tenants.

Overcrowding.

Overcrowding is on the increase and because of war-time conditions it is almost impossible to secure abatement except in the most serious cases. Eight cases have been abated during the year.

Vermineous Premises.

There has been a further increase in the number of houses found to be vermineous from 22 in 1942 to 30 in 1943. War-time conditions are in my opinion to blame for this increase and the shortage of insecticides is aggravating the position.

The steam disinfection of firewatchers' bedding has been carried out free of charge and this has necessitated the disinfector being worked on four days a week.

Meat and Foods.

Under the Government Scheme, slaughtering is carried out at Weston-super-Mare, and therefore the only meat inspection is that of pigs for home consumption, casualties

and the inspection of meat at the butchers' shops.

A big increase in the amount of other foods condemned has taken place and in this connection over 200 visits have been paid to grocers and similar shops. The following quantities of food have been condemned:-

Beef	2 cwt. 99 lbs.
Mutton	26 lbs.
Veal	14 lbs.
Offal	10 lbs.
Net Fish	8 cwt. 38 lbs.
Canned Fish	196 tins
Canned Meat	612 tins
Canned Fruit	282 tins
Canned Vegetables	135 tins
Canned Soup	38 tins
Canned Milk	508 tins
Fish and Meat Paste	59 tins or jars
Pickles	23 jars
Fresh Fruit	28 lbs.
Cheese	94 lbs.
Bacon	9 lbs.
Vegetables	6 cwt.
Lard	1 lb.
Butter	3 lbs.
Sugar	70 lbs.
Jam	56 lbs.
Dried Fruit	89 lbs.
Sweets	16 lbs.
Sauce	8 bottles
Bottled Fruit	4 bottles
Fish Cakes	1488
Buns and Cakes	264
Oatmeal	2 cwt. 32 lbs.

Staff.

The appointment of an additional Sanitary Inspector is still vacant.

Miss Hetherington, the Clerk, has ably carried out her duties during the year.

SUMMARY

Inspections made during the year.

General Sanitation

Water Supply	29
Drainage	104
Common Lodging Houses	2
Houses let in lodgings	7
Factories	43
Outworkers	46
Public Conveniences	9
Theatres and Places of Entertainment	1
Rats and Mice	62
Shops	197
Smoke obstructions	6
Swimming Baths	56
Miscellaneous	103

Housing

Houses inspected under Public Health Acts	125
Visits paid to the above houses	408
houses inspected under Housing Acts	-
Visits paid to the above houses	-
Houses inspected in connection with overcrowding	21
Visits paid to the above houses	39
Vermineous premises inspected	30
Visits paid to the above premises	59
Miscellaneous	7

Infectious Disease

Inquiries in cases of Infectious Disease	52
Visits re disinfection	8
Miscellaneous	-1

Meat and Food Inspection

Visits to Slaughterhouses	36
Visits to Shops and Stalls	20
Visits to other premises for meat inspection	42
Visits to Butchers	45
Visits to Fishmongers and Poulterers	10
Visits to Grocers	235
Visits to Greengrocers and Fruiterers	4
Visits to Confectioners	6
Visits to Bakeries	22
Visits to Fried Fish Shops	7
Visits to Cowsheds	24
Visits to Lairies and Milk Shops	52
Visits to Restaurants	4
Visits to Food Preparing Premises	7
Visits in connection with Sampling	
Milk Bacteriological	19
Milk Tubercle Bacilli	6
Miscellaneous	52

Explosives

Visits in connection with explosives	4
Visits in connection with petroleum spirit	6

Work Done

Complaints investigated	153
Additional water closets provided	5
Choked drains and sewers cleared	29
Drains relaid	4
Drains repaired	4
Inspection chambers provided	2
Defective water closets repaired	6
Defective roofs repaired	21
Defective windows repaired	10
Defective eavesgutters and downpipes repaired	11
Defective walls repaired	3
Defective plastering repaired	5
Defective firegrates and ranges repaired	2
Defective coppers repaired	3
Defective doors repaired	5
Defective chimneys repaired	5
Defective flush cisterns repaired or renewed	8

Defective ceilings repaired	8
Defective scullery troughs repaired or renewed	1
Defective scullery waste pipes repaired	3
Defective floors repaired	5
Dampness remedied	4
Ceilings whitened	10
Rooms distempered or papered	10
Nuisances from the keeping of animals abated	3
Foul accumulations removed	15
Overcrowding abated	8
Verminous premises cleansed	22
Premises disinfested from rats or mice	13
Houses cleansed	2
W.C.s cleansed	1
Smoke nuisances abated	2

I am, Mr. Mayor, Mrs. Councillor Reed,
and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

R.K. LEAN,

Chief Sanitary Inspector.